VASU MEETS A TADPOLE

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Illustrations
SUDDHASATTWA BASU

ISBN 978-81-237-5436-9

First Edition 2009
Reprints 2010, 2011, 2012, 2021 (*Saka* 1943)
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₹ 35.00

Published by the Director, National Book Trust, India
Nehru Bhawan, 5 Institutional Area, Phase-II
Vasant Kunj, New Delhi- 110 070
www.nbtindia.gov.in

Nehru Bal Pustakalaya

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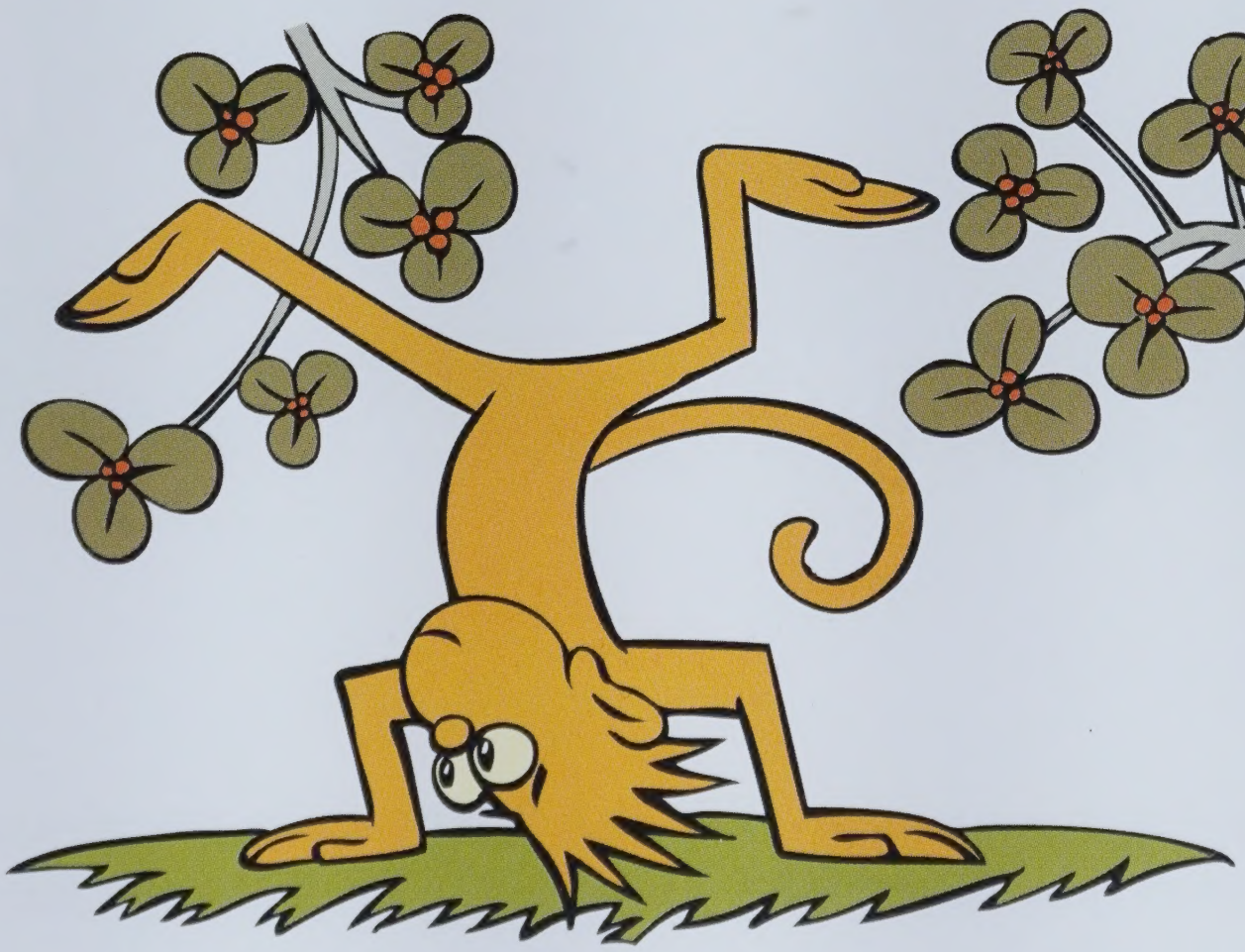

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'It is raining for almost a week. Oh god, isn't it boring to sit tied down to home like this! Once the rain stops, I will take a stroll through the forest path,' Vasu thought.

As if his prayers are answered, the sky stopped raining. Vasu came out of his house and looked at the sky. All the black clouds which resembled

elephants had disappeared. Sunshine was leaking through the white clouds which looked like sleeping polar bears. Trees looked more green and free from dust. Some of the leaves were holding droplets just like tear drops. Some of these drops trapped sunrays inside and shined like diamond ornaments. Vasu pulled a tree branch and it showered water drops on him. He felt cold and started to walk through the wet forest path.

'Is it not nice to breathe the aroma of the wet soil and rotten leaves?' Vasu whispered to himself, a little bit loudly.

"Of course!" It was Darky the elephant who replied. He was looking darker. He must have got wet in the rain. Darky sprayed himself with loose sand making Vasu laugh. These crazy elephants always do that after a nice bath. They spray themselves with fine sand. Vasu waved at Darky who was chewing fresh palm leaves.

"Tok...tok...tok…!"

"Who is hitting the trees?" It was a little bird who had a sharp beak. "Why are you hitting on that tree?" Vasu asked.

"I am having my breakfast," the wood pecker bird answered.

"Are you eating the tree?"

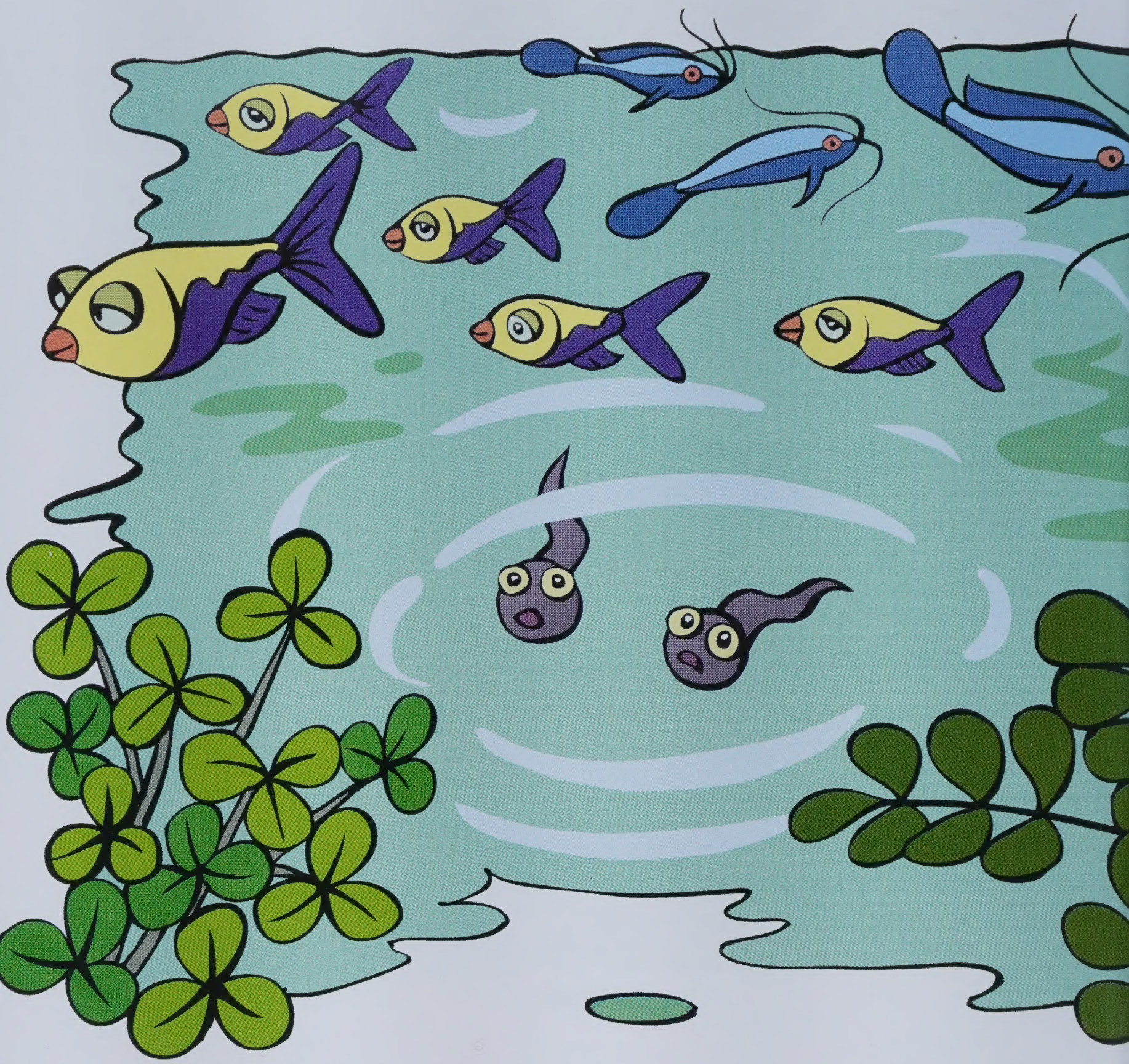
"No. Only the hiding worms. Want to share?" The wood pecker offered a fat worm to Vasu.

"No. Thanks. I am a vegetarian." Vasu moved on.

Vasu noticed little water falls at a number of places. They were laughing and jumping over the rocks like naughty children. There were tiny pools and lakes everywhere. He sat near one such tiny lake. A close look revealed that little creatures were floating and wriggling in the lake.

'Crazy little fellows,' Vasu thought. The water was clear and the bottom of the lake was covered with some green stuff. "Who has poured green paint into this lake?" Vasu murmured.

"I am not green paint," the green stuff called out, "I am called algae—a tiny water plant."



Little fishes came out of the little underwater forest of the green algae and stared at him with their tiny-weenie eyes. Then they hurriedly followed their mother fish and disappeared under a stone. There were different kinds of fishes in the pond. Silvery-greys, green and golden ones. Some tiny fishes with big eyes came close to the surface and looked at him.

"Why are you looking sad?" Vasu asked one of them.

"Our mother has gone to the forest and she has not returned."

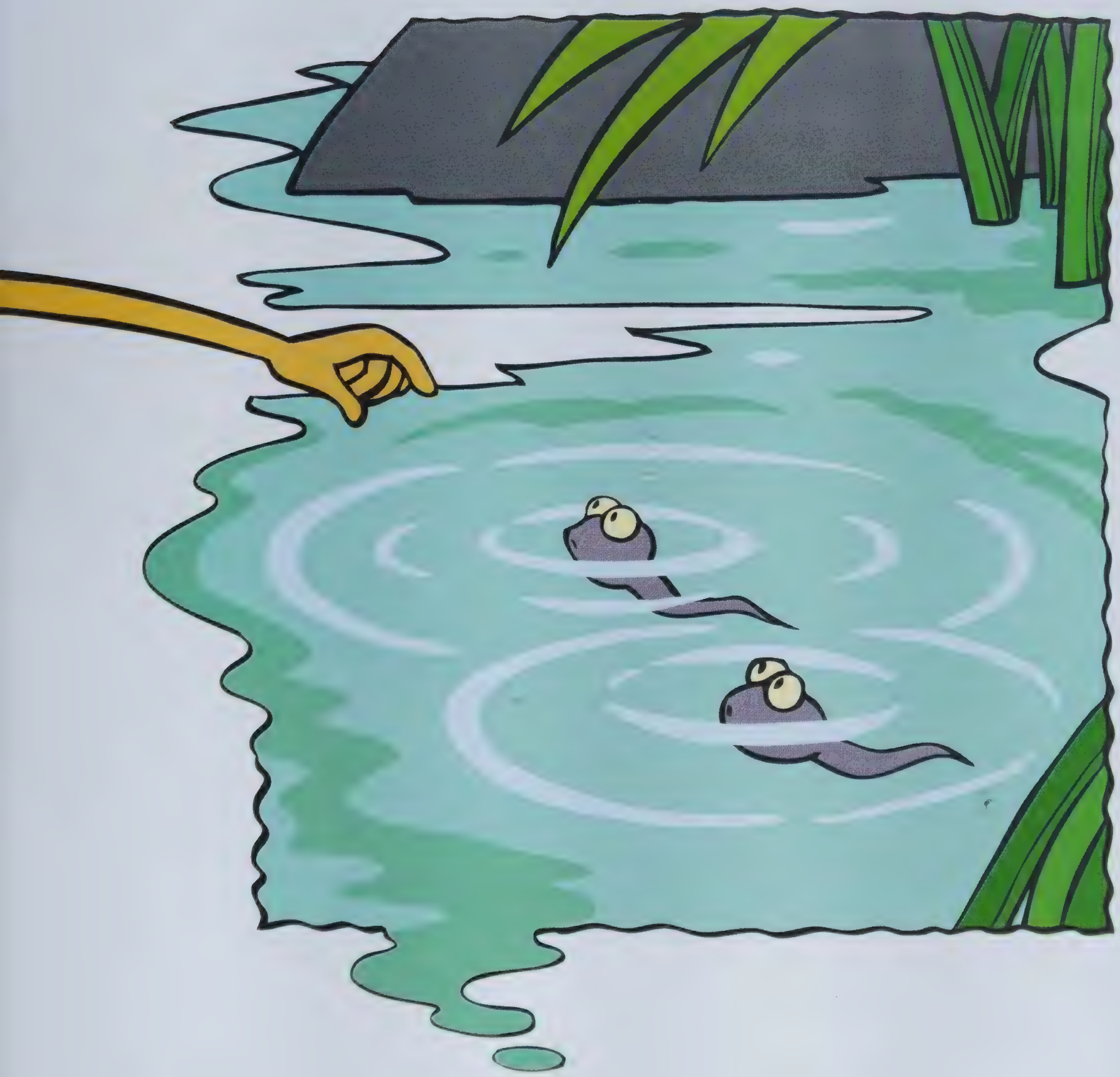
Vasu had a hearty laugh. "Your mother has gone to the forest? What forest are you talking about? Is it some under water forest?"

"No, no, the real forest," the tiny one replied.

"Probably I can help you. In case I meet her I can ask her to return home quickly," Vasu said with a smile.

"How did she go? Did she swim all the way?" Vasu was a little bit sarcastic.

"How can a fish swim through the forest?" Vasu asked fully knowing that fishes usually do not go out of lakes and ponds.

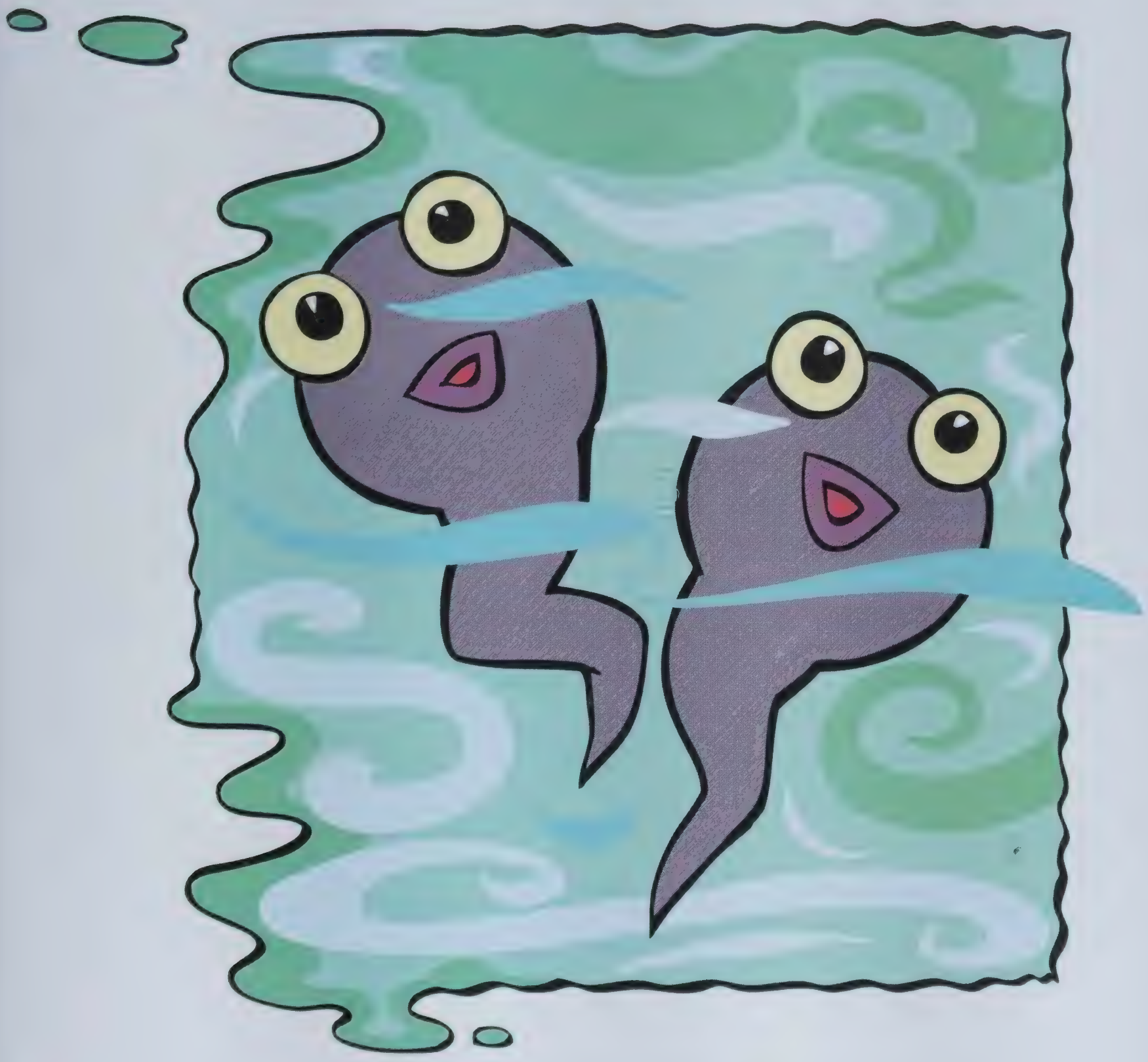


"She is a better jumper than you. She jumps and hops and goes," the tiny fish said proudly.

"Jumping and hopping! A fish? This is the first time I am hearing about a hopping fish that too on the land," Vasu said.

"We are not fishes, little monkey," the tiny one stated.

"Call me Vasu," he said. "What is your name?" Vasu asked.



"I am Jumpy and he is Corky," the little fish introduced himself and his brother.

"Okay, I will help. What is your mother's name?" Vasu asked.

"Froggy!" The brothers said.

"Is she by any chance a frog?" Vasu asked with hesitation.

"You got it!" Some one said splashing water all over. It was a big frog. She stared at Vasu and winked at him in a friendly manner!

She must be the mother froggy. Vasu guessed.

"Crok crok, thanks for talking to my boys," she said.

"How come your sons are fishes?" Vasu enquired.

The froggy mother laughed and said, "They are not fishes. They are called tadpoles and will become full grown frogs like me one day. If you

don't believe me please keep watching them daily. Consider me as your friend. Once they are fully grown they can jump out also. We are very good jumpers and hoppers. That is why we are called amphibians."

"What?"

"We are called amphibians, that is we can live both on land and in water. All the frogs are amphibians."

"Interesting!"

Mother froggy suddenly stretched her tongue out and caught an innocent grasshopper.

"I am hungry too. Let me walk back home. I will be back to see your tadpoles later," said Vasu.

The froggy did not reply. Her mouth was full.

Printed at: Polykam Offset,New Delhi-110028

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₹ 35.00
ISBN 812375436-1
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